

The Power of Support: Improving Clinical Trial Efficiency and Compliance Through a Clinical Research Assistant Role

Sabrina McCoy, Erika Ernest, Ainsley McCormack, Olivia Vigran, Eliza White, Zoë Swainson, Brianne Bodin, BSN, Ankeeta Joshi, Janice Mehnert MD, Bhavana Pothuri MD

Background

In 2025, NYU Langone's Perlmutter Cancer Center's (PCC) clinical trial office (CTO) successfully accrued 864 patients to trials across all Disease Management Groups (DMGs). To mitigate onboarding barriers and enhance operational support, our Clinical Coordination Unit (CCU) introduced a new entry-level Clinical Research Assistant (CRA) role into our clinical research ladder, designed to support our growing CTO while integrating candidates into the talent pipeline earlier in their professional career.

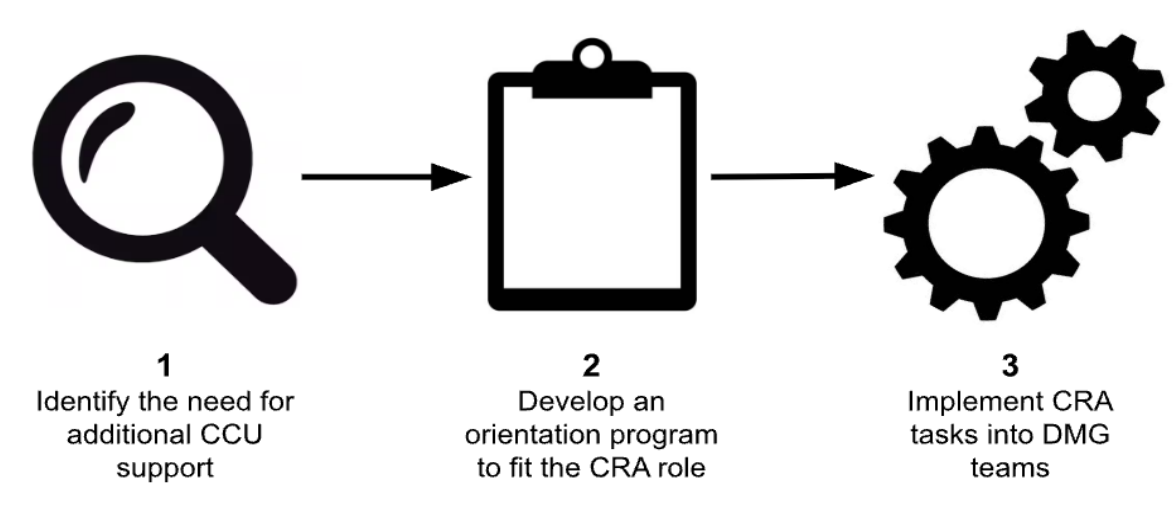
Goals

To provide additional support to clinical teams while creating an entry level position within the CCU

To equip new team members with the skills needed to improve trial operations without requiring addition to protocols

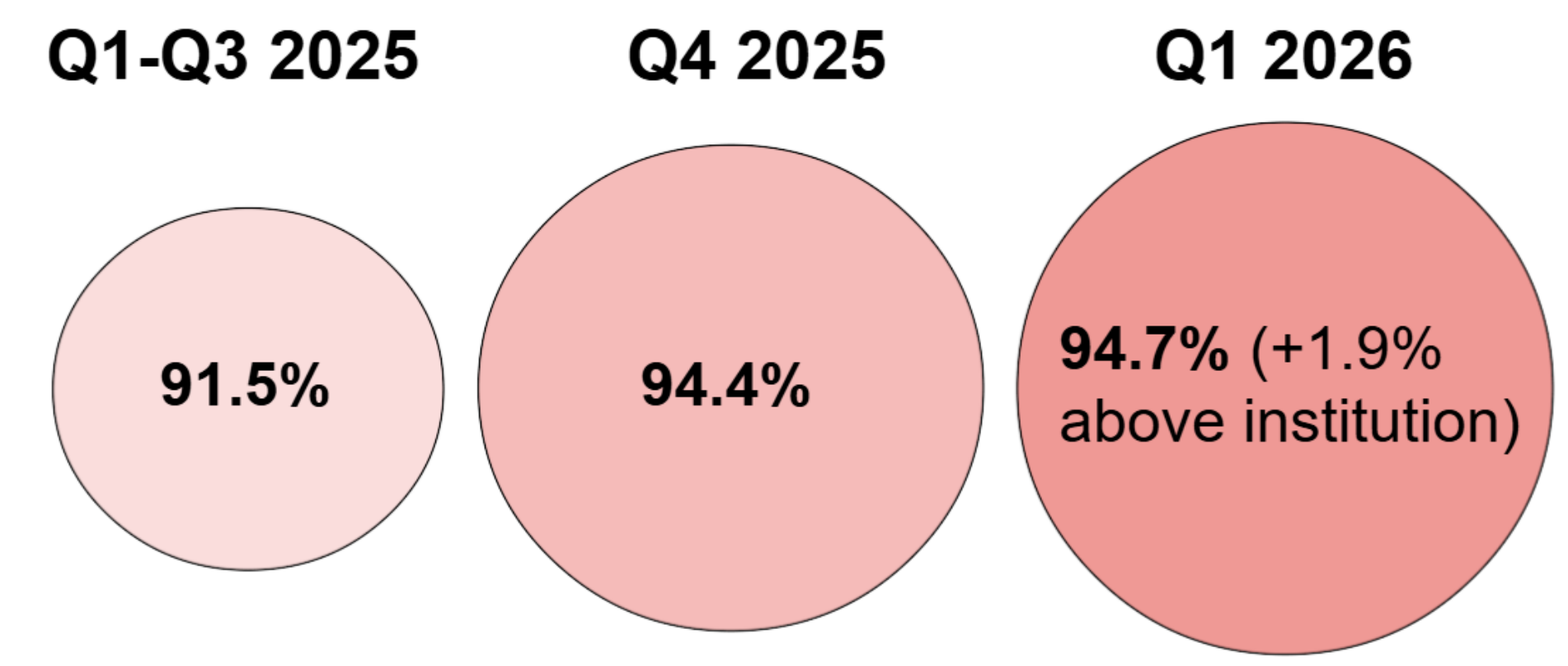
Solutions & Methods

Management conducted a needs-based assessment to define a scope of practice for the CRA role, focused on non-patient-facing tasks. Based on this assessment, a comprehensive orientation and competency-based training program was developed incorporating GCP education, data integrity fundamentals, and mentorship from Clinical Research Coordinators (CRCs).



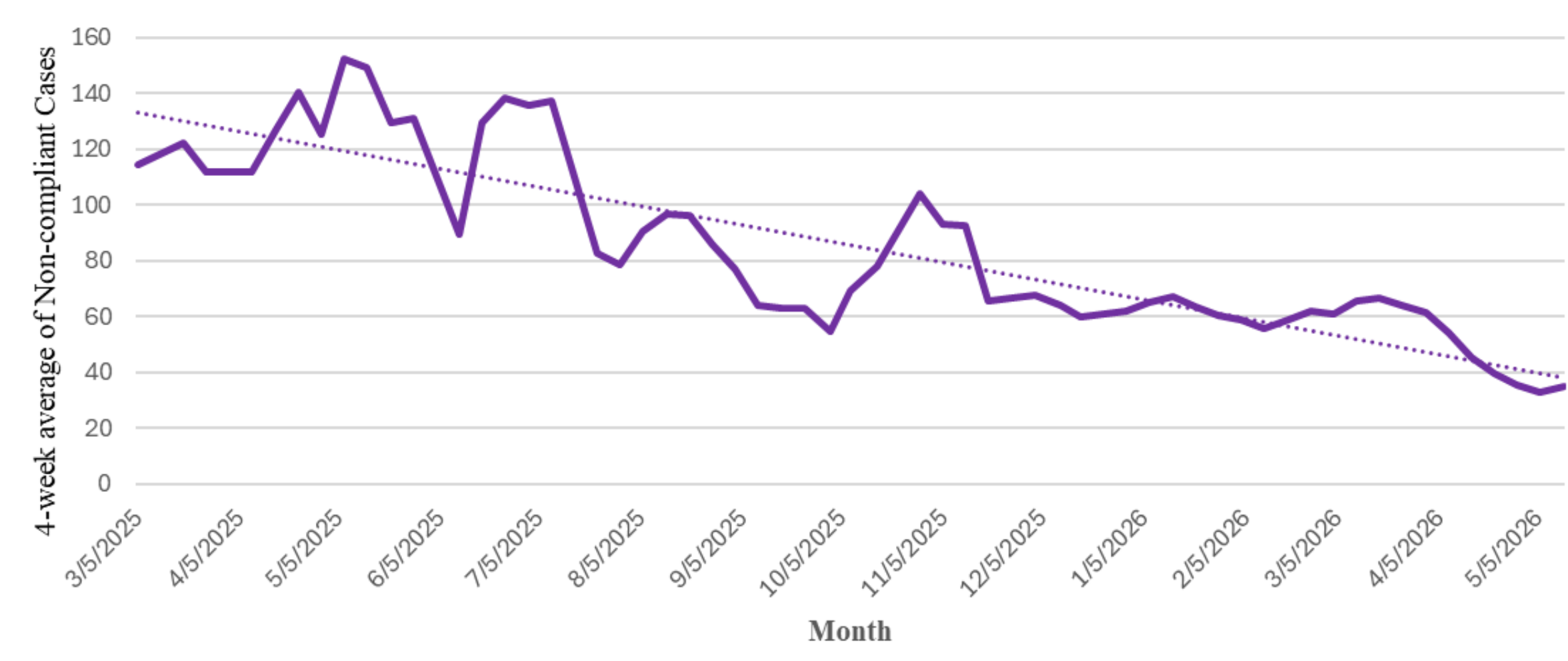
Outcomes

Figure 1. Rate of Department Billing Compliance per Quarter



There has been a 79% reduction (Figure 2) in the monthly average of billing non-compliance cases from May 2025 (n=152) to May 2026 (n=31). Our overall department compliance is 94.7% from January to May 2026, compared to 91.5% during the same quarter last year (Figure 1).

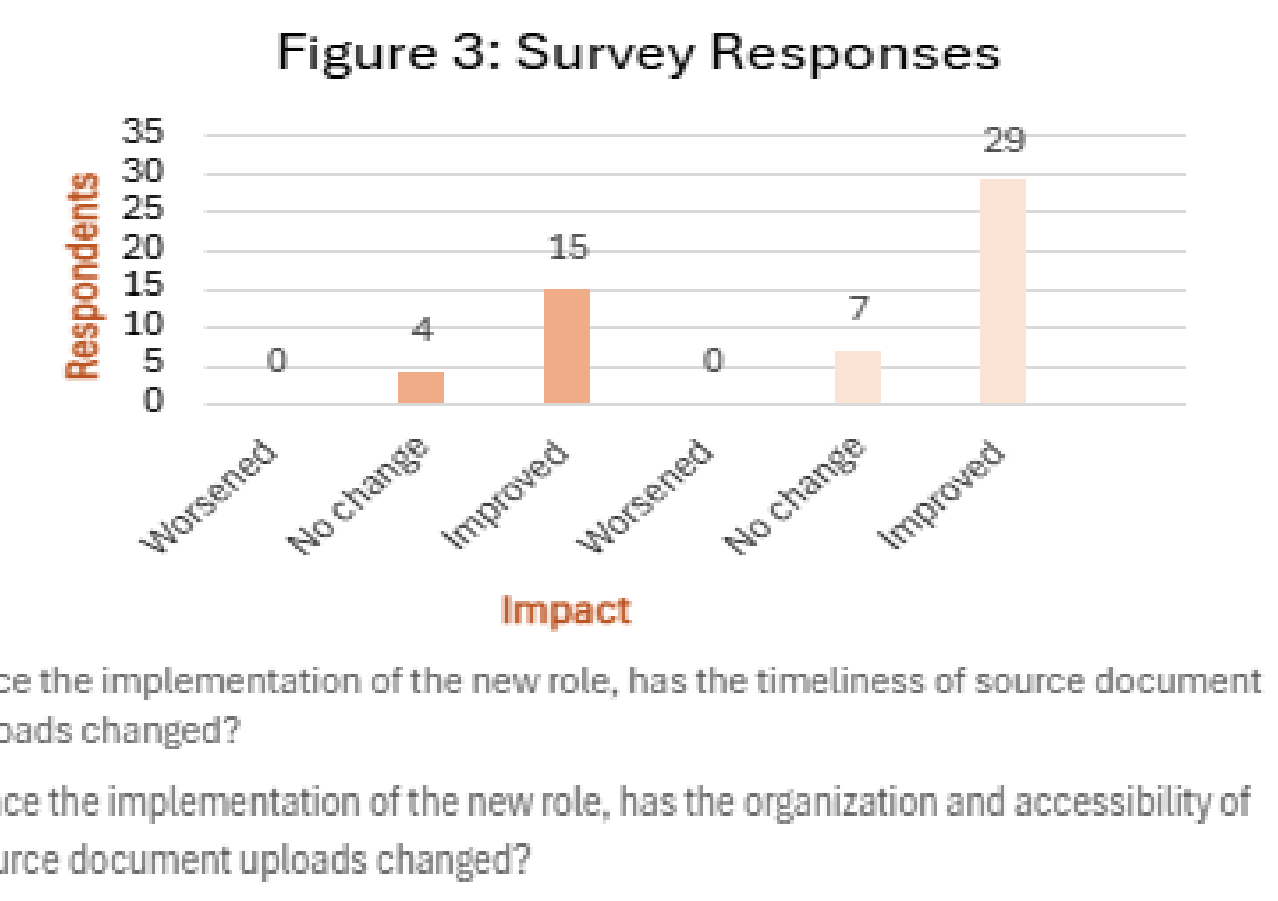
Figure 2. Trends in Monthly Average of Non-compliant Appointments Flagged



Additional initiatives and pilot workflows trusted to the position included:

- Audit prep documentation tracker
- Secondary reviews of visit preparation
- Research sample kit placement
- Smart phrase review
- Tracking of trial related reimbursements

Since implementing the CRA role, source document upload frequency has increased by 200% (shifting from bi-weekly to daily). Staff satisfaction survey results demonstrated that the CRA role has had a positive impact, as shown in Figure 3.



Lessons Learned and Future Directions

- The CRA position provides valuable administrative support to the CCU and has had a positive impact on billing non-compliance, staff satisfaction, and document uploads.
- The position can provide urgent onsite support with shorter onboarding and orientation (by 4-8 weeks) than the CRC role, with decreased regulatory burden.
- This position presents potential for growth opportunities within the clinical ladder program, improve retention rates, and be scalable across disease teams.

Questions?

Contact for more information:

Sabrina McCoy:
Sabrina.Mccoy@nyulangone.org

Erika Ernest:
Erika.Ernest@nyulangone.org